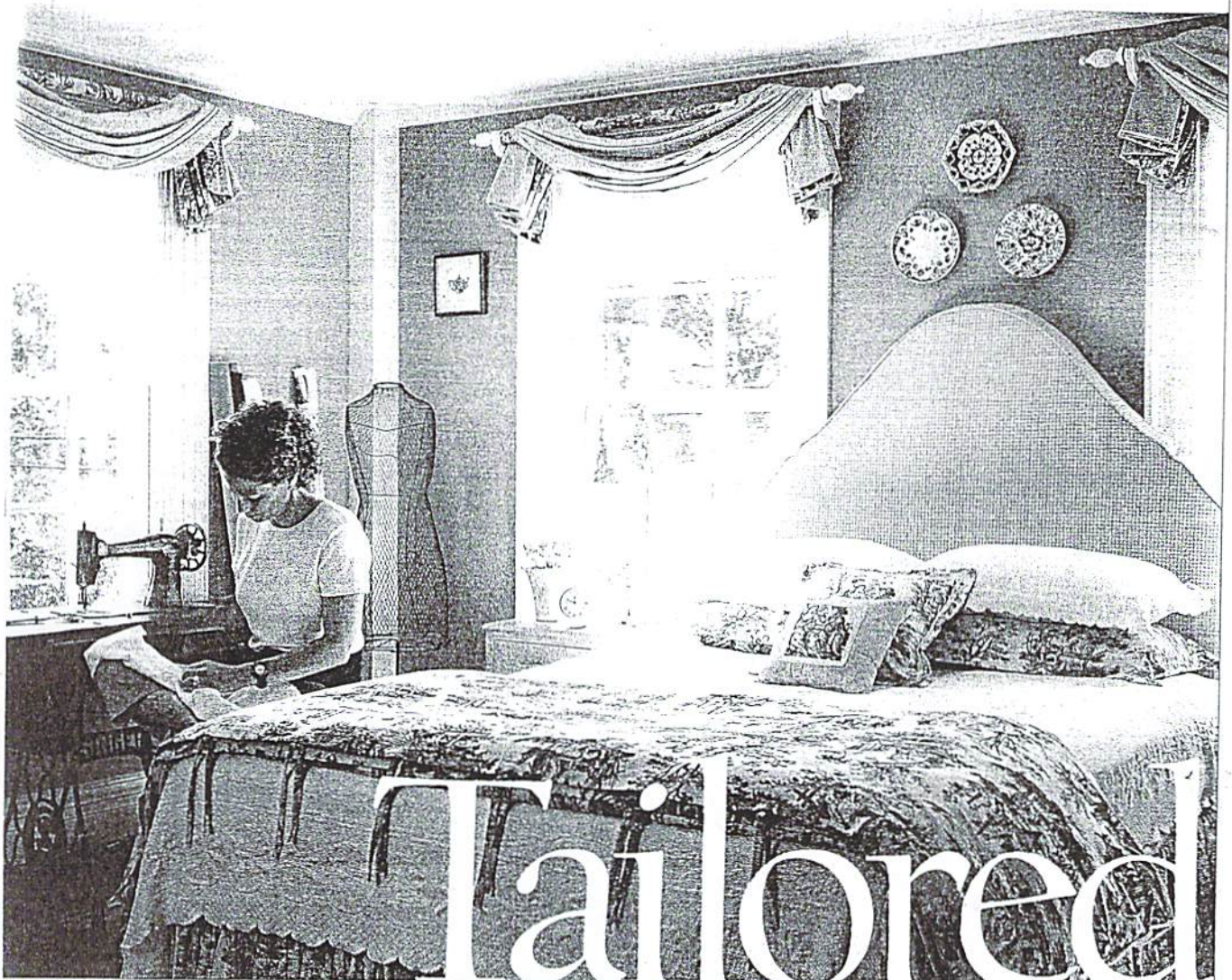


## GOOD LOOKS FOR LESS



# Tailored for her family

FABRIC BARGAINS KEEP THIS MOM IN STITCHES—AND HER FAMILY'S MASSACHUSETTS HOME IS THE BETTER FOR IT.

This bright, sunny guest room, also Meredith Murphy's sewing room, features yolk-yellow fabrics and cheery blue toile. After Meredith tucks away her antique Singer, she sets her modern portable machine on the sewing table. One of her projects, the headboard, was made by covering  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch plywood with 2-inch-thick foam and fabric. She stitched piping on the top for a finished look that gives the headboard dimension, but notes that the fabric could be stapled for a no-sew option.

BY STEVE SLACK PHOTOGRAPHS BY SAM GRAY PRODUCED BY CATHERINE KRAMER AND ESTELLE BOND GURALNICK





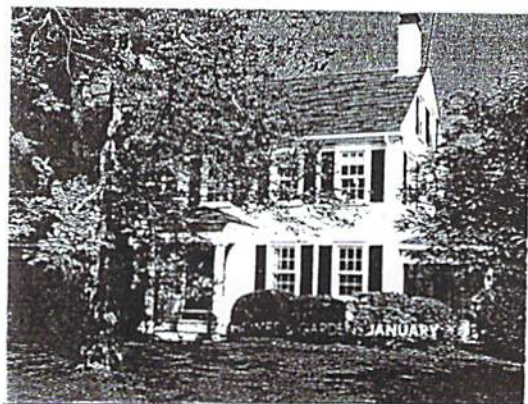
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M

eredith Murphy keeps a tape measure at the ready, tidily tucked into a corner of her purse. Nearly every drawer of her house has a pair of scissors. You may also find a fabric-store swatch, cut with pinking shears and posted on the fridge.

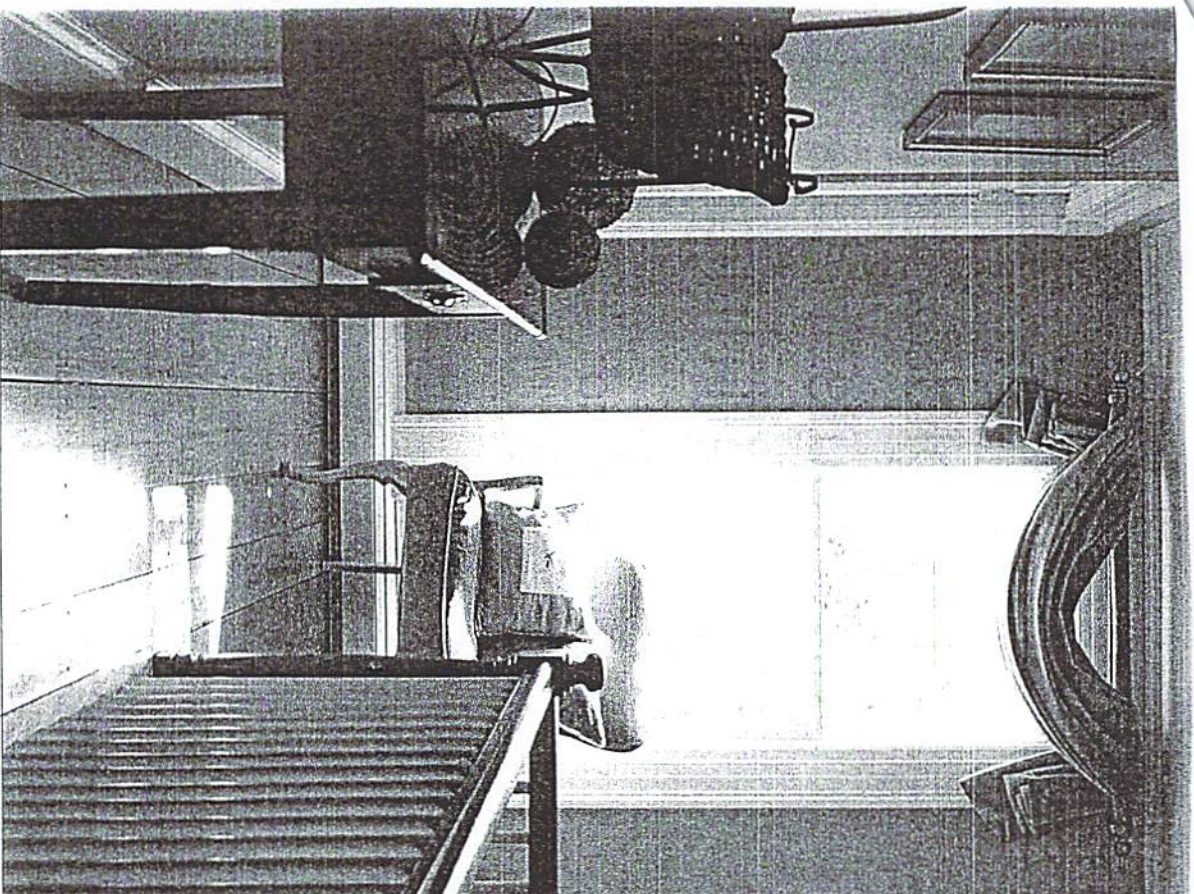
In the 6th grade she "paid lots of attention in home ec," learning to sew—and to save money making her own clothes. Both lessons stuck. "I love being creative," says the 39-year-old mother of three boys. "It gives me an outlet, something to do during Peter Jr.'s nap time, and a way to get what I want for my home."

She shops bargain-rich fabric outlets for their variety and stock of irregular yardage. "Most of the time the flaw or snag is five yards down the fabric and you can cut around it," she says. >> on 44



Tiles on the fireplace surround (top) helped Meredith choose her living room color scheme—primarily gray-greens ranging from sage to taupe. She chose a linenlike fabric for the bishop-sleeve draperies to give textural interest to a quietly neutral room. Pinch-pleat fabric hooks, hidden by the cording and fringed tassels, provide the pouf. The traditional style of their home (left) captured Meredith with its curb appeal. She told husband Peter to "be ready to write a check" the moment they stepped through the door. Jimmy, 11, Kevin, 8, and Peter Jr., 3, stack up next to their parents, Peter and Meredith Murphy (above).

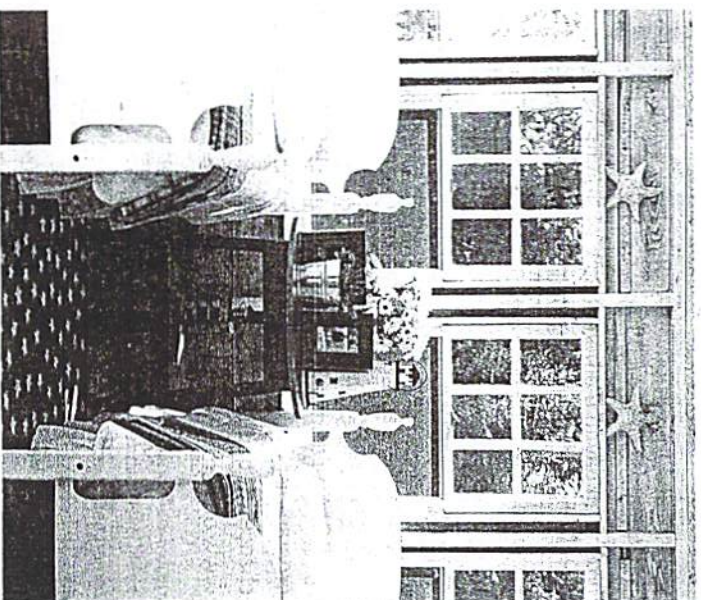




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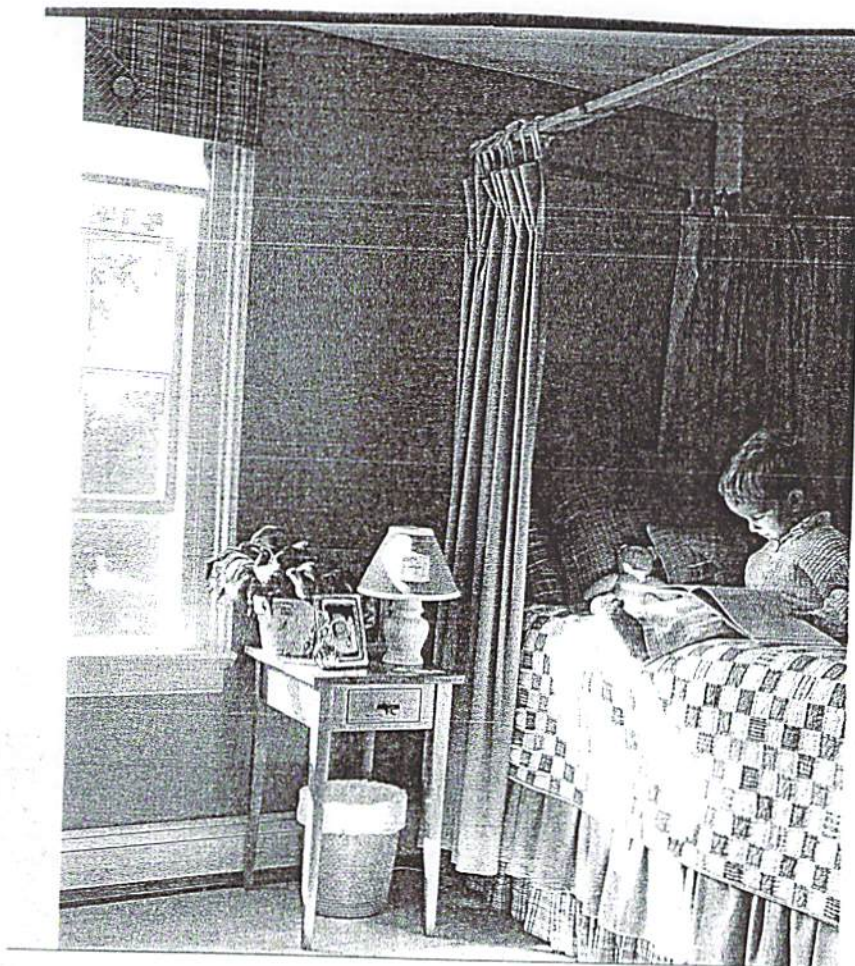
She also loves locating yardage at the end of a bolt and bargaining for a deal to "buy it all." And she keeps a look out for 3- and 4-yard pieces of trim, which are usually bundled up and sold at a discount. "The right trim really makes a project look more substantial and it can be very expensive at regular price."

There's always a project on Meredith's mind when she is on the prowl for fabric. She recently loaded her car trunk with 30 yards of a pretty yellow-and-blue plaid (\$1/yard on sale) out of which she fashioned window treatments, pillow shams, bed curtains, and a bed skirt for her youngest son's room. >> on 46



Upholstery-weight velvet backed with a raw silk collapses into rich folds for a luxurious swag treatment in the upstairs hallway (top left). Velvet also covers an heirloom French chair (top right). On the sleeping porch (left), creamy white paint freshens second-hand beds from Meredith's parents. Matelassé bedspreads layer over flouncy bed skirts of cotton eyellet bought for \$4.99 a yard.





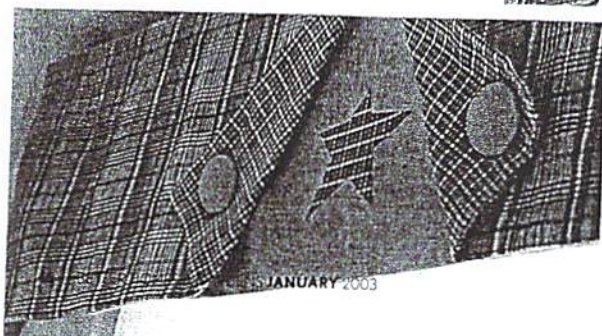
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For interest as well as versatility, Meredith usually sticks with solid and neutral textures, though a few bolts of novelty fabrics crowd a corner of her sewing room. She uses whimsical prints for small-scale coordinates, such as accent pillows, covers for curtain poles, and hostess gifts for friends and neighbors.

Meredith taught herself to do upholstering: "I just took a chair apart and said, 'Oh, ok. That's how you do that.' " And she gladly gathers in heirloom furniture and hand-me-down pieces to create chic-on-the-cheap furnishings.

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Peter Jr. inherited his older brother's bed (above), but his mom gave it distinction with blue chambray curtains at the corners. Meredith sprayed a crafts-store lampshade (right) with adhesive, applied the fabric, and trimmed the whole thing with braided gimp adhered with hot-glue. She penned good-night wishes with a fabric marker. A wood 1x4 anchored to the wall with "L" brackets forms the base for a window valance (below). The centered star was ironed on to the chambray panel using fusible webbing.





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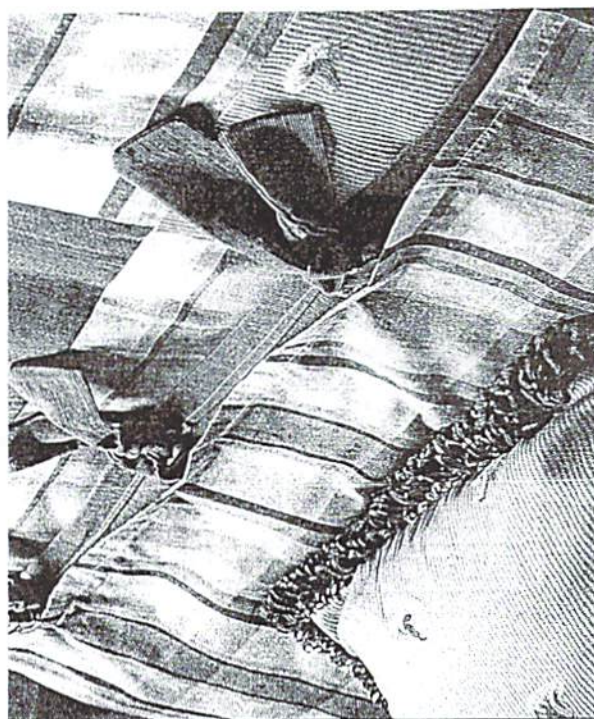
Though capable of adding dressmaker details to almost anything, Meredith still isn't shy about using easier methods, such as hot-gluing trim to a project, hemming and edging with iron-on fusible tape, stapling fabric around a headboard, or punching holes for grommets rather than delicately stitching ties for hanging curtains. These are the kinds of tool-heavy time-savers that may interest her boys, Meredith says. So far, only Kevin has wanted to make a pillow with her, which he proudly displays in his room. They'll come around some day, she thinks. After all, she inherited her craftiness from her father, who still uses Meredith's first sewing machine to make sails for boat projects.

"My mother never sewed. But my father can make anything," Meredith says. "I think I'm more like him." ☺

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The Murphys' two oldest boys—Kevin and Jimmy—share a blueberry-color bunk bed (near right). Meredith made duvet covers (far right) for both beds, stitching blocks of 18x24-inch fabric in a quilt pattern. Coordinating pillows and window treatments tie the room together. She made the upper-bunk cover to match Kevin's, hoping Kevin would make his bed more often since it wouldn't be so difficult. "But it didn't work," she says.

